

U.S. Embassy Bratislava

Program Office: Public Affairs Section

Funding Opportunity Title: Mentoring Program for Encouraging Investigative Journalism in Slovakia

Announcement Type: Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: SLO10015GR050

Catalog of Federal Financial Assistance (CFDA): 19.040

Starting date of the project: September 2015

Award Period: 12 months

Award Amount: \$50,000 is available for this grant program. A single award will be granted.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit proposals by email to the Public Affairs Section at press_bratislava@state.gov

Deadline for Applications: June 30, 2015

INFORMATION SESSION: There will be an information session for all interested organizations on Monday, June 15 at 2 pm at the Embassy. If you would like to come, please email press_bratislava@state.gov by Thursday, June 11.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The U.S. Embassy in Bratislava's Public Affairs Section (PAS) is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). PAS invites non-profit organizations to submit proposals to set up a mentoring program to encourage investigative reporting in Slovakia.

Eligibility is limited to non-profit organizations with previous media experience. Applicants must have a demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following subject areas: good media contacts, strengthening independent media and journalism, anti-corruption, or promoting transparency and the rule of law, and the ability to develop and implement a program.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing.

II. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The role media can play as a watchdog is indispensable for democracy, and for this reason the U.S. Embassy seeks to support a proposal to strengthen investigative journalism in Slovakia. Investigative journalism is a form of journalism in which reporters deeply investigate a single topic of interest, such as serious crimes, political corruption, or corporate wrongdoing. It is systematic, in-depth, and original research and reporting, often involving the unearthing of secrets. It also often involves heavy use of public records and data, with a focus on social justice and accountability. Many agree that investigative journalism is still limited in Slovakia, and there is a scarcity of skilled investigative journalists.

The Embassy aims to fund a training and mentoring program to encourage investigative reporting in Slovakia. We seek to train new investigative journalists by supporting the establishment of a mentorship program for promising journalism students and providing them and their journalist mentors with training in how to conduct in-depth investigations. We envision that this program would include several media outlets with the involvement of one to three of their senior journalists as mentors and about 20 journalism students and junior journalists participating as mentees.

This training and mentoring program should:

- Provide a fair and transparent mechanism for selecting the young journalists to participate
- Include a coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the program
- Introduce the young journalists and students to tools, such as:
 - analysis of documents, such as lawsuits and other legal documents, tax records, government reports, regulatory reports, and corporate financial filings
 - public and private databases
 - investigation of technical issues, including scrutiny of government and business practices and their effects
 - research into social and legal issues
 - numerous interviews with on-the-record sources as well as, in some instances, interviews with anonymous sources (for example whistleblowers)
 - utilizing access to information laws to obtain documents and data from government agencies.

U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section role:

1. Will monitor the overall program implementation.
2. Will approve participants from the list shared by the recipient.
3. Will need to approve the schedule of planned activities of the recipient.
4. Will need to clear/approve all publicity language.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is limited to non-profit organizations. The Embassy encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the USG to apply under this announcement. Applicants are not required to include funding from other donors. However, applications that include additional in-kind and/or cash contributions from non-U.S. Government sources will be more competitive, since cost-sharing demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities and will be considered to show great cost effectiveness.

IMPORTANT: Organizations applying for assistance awards must obtain a Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) **DUNS number** prior to the beginning of the period of the grant: For details go to: <http://www.dnb.com/pl/ODNB.aspx?id=DUNS>. Obtaining a DUNS number in support of submitting a grant proposal to the USG is to be at no cost to the applicant. Any additional services offered during the registration process are **not necessary and the applicant is under no obligation to sign up for them**.

NATO Commercial and Governmental Entity (NCAGE) Code must be assigned to applicant organization. Applicants need to go to the following web address and request an NCAGE code: <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx>. All applicants must also be **registered in SAM (System for Award Management)** prior to receiving an award from the State Department: <http://www.sam.gov>. Note: Awards to individuals are exempt from DUNS, NCAGE and registration in SAM requirements. All grantee organizations must also have non-profit status.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 12 months

Starting date of the project: September 2015

Award Amount: \$50,000 is available for this grant program. A single award will be granted.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit proposals by email to the Public Affairs Section at press_bratislava@state.gov.

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before June 30 2015, 11:59 p.m. eastern time. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for consideration. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the NOFO instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this NOFO.

The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 – Application: This form can be found [on-line here](#). All applicants also need to complete Form SF-424 available at https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/sf424_0.pdf.

Section 2 - Problem Statement: The problem statement must describe the need for the project and include any supporting statistics or evidence, as well as identify any existing resources.

Section 3 – Project Goals/Implementation Plan: The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project, relative to the problem statement. The proposed activities should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. Finally, this section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

Section 4 - Organizational Capability: Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience with similar projects, and organizational experience and background as these relate to the proposed activities. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the staffing plan for the proposed project.

Section 5 - Appendices:

The concept paper submission must include two appendices:

- (a) **Budget** – the budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs.
- (b) **Resume** – a resume must be included for the proposed key staff person, such as the Project Director.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The U.S. Embassy will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value on the basis of technical merit and cost.

- **Problem Statement:** This section should identify the importance and relevance of the applicant's proposal to the program objectives of the U.S. Embassy as described in this solicitation.
- **Project Goals/Implementation Plan:** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on

how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the problem statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period.

- **Organizational Capability:** Proposals should demonstrate the ability to develop and implement programs in the area of investigative journalism. Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals.
- **Appendices:**
 - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the Budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.
 - **Resume:** The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the selected project director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The co-operative agreement shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through either mail or facsimile transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Anticipated Time to Award: Applicants should expect to be notified of the funding decisions within 30 days after the submission deadline and expect to receive grant funds within 1 month after notification.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Grantees are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic

and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via electronic mail to an address to be provided in the award.

VII. DISCLAIMER

If a proposal is selected for funding, the U.S. Embassy has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the U.S. Embassy.